Nixon Man Survives Unscathed

Donald Rumsfeld is one of the few top aides of Richard M. Nixon who emerged from the Watergate era with reputation unscathed.

Rumsfeld was representing the old Illinois 13th District in the House of Representatives when Nixon on his fourth attempt succeeded in convincing him that the proper outlet for his ambition was the excutive branch.

Rumsfeld, then 37 years old, gave up his seat in 1969 to become head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, then considered a nearly impenetrable bureaucracy.

From OEO, Rumsfeld bounced to the White House, where he became counselor to the President and then, when Phase II price controls came into effect, he was named head of the Cost of Living Council.

In December, 1972, Nixon named Rumsfeld ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and he stayed in Brussels until the Watergate crisis began to topple the Nixon White House.

Although Rumsfeld was a key figure in the group that made transition plans for Gerald Ford's assumption of the presidency, he constantly denied at that time that he would be involved in the Ford White House, and went back to his post in Brussels.

A month later, however, he came back to Washington to become, as some critics put it, "Ford's Haldeman"—chief of staff to President Ford as H.R. Haldeman had been to President Nixon.

At the White House Rumsfeld has in effect administered the business of the President, including supervision of more than 500 staff members.

He is considered a pragmatist who is highly organized, extremely intelligent and a "quick study" who uses enormous stamina to his administrative advantage.

DONALD RUMSFELD
...pragmatic

He is a physical fitness enthusiast and tries to keep in the kind of shape that won him a state wrestling championship in Illinois more than 25 years ago.

At the White House he has preferred to work on his feet at a "stand-up" desk.

He grew up in the northern outskirts of Chicago, attending New Trier High School in Winnetka, where he met his future wife, Joyce Pierson.

He went from New Trier to Princeton University. At Princeton he was in ROTC and after graduation went into the Navy and served two years as flight instructor.

He was anxious to get into politics and, while attending Georgetown University law shcool here from 1957 to 1959, worked as an intern to then-Rep. David Dennison (R-8Ohio) and then-Rep. Robert P. Griffin (R-Mich.).

He was told that Washington was a poor place to start a political career and went back to Illinois to work in an investment banking firm and to look for his chance.

It came almost right away, when Rep. Marguerite Stitt Church decided to retire in 1962. With help from his old New Trier High and Princeton friends, Rumsfeld (then 29) set out to get himself elected to Congress. He succeeded.

In 1965, he and several other young congressmen led a drive to oust the late Charles Halleck as leader of House Republicans. The young members' candidate to succeed Halleck was Gerald Ford.